

## 16 New Haven student inspectors to be at polls

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It's not easy attracting young voters to the polls.

But New Haven village officials say they hope an expanded student election inspector program will change that reality.

More students and communities are participating in the program, which gives young people a firsthand look the voting process.

Today, 16 juniors and seniors from New Haven High School will be paid \$7 per hour to work a 7 1/2 - hour shift at precincts throughout Macomb County.

The group will help election officers count ballots, report election results -- and hopefully pick up a lifelong appreciation for the democratic process, program officials say.

With this experience, they "will be more likely to be voters when they're 18," said Macomb County Clerk Carmella Sabaugh.

Sabaugh and the clerks of New Haven and the townships of Chesterfield, Lenox and Ray are coordinating the program. It puts into practice a 1997 state law that allows 16- and 17-year-olds to work at polling sites on Election Day. Jessica Nelson, a 16-year-old junior, said her interest in local politics influenced her to volunteer for the program.

She is upset by a proposal calling for the dissolution of her village. If approved, New Haven would become part of Lenox Township, easing the village's financial woes, but threatening its identity in the process, she said.

The proposal also concerns 16-year-old James Stier, who is to work at the Ray Township polls this morning.

Stier, an aspiring politician, said he is eager to get involved in the electoral process and plans to volunteer again next year.

And after that: "As soon as I turn 18, I'll be up at the Michigan Secretary of State, registering to vote," he said.

Many communities in southeast Michigan have student election inspector programs. Since their inception in Oakland County four years ago, they have increased in popularity, said Kathryn Dorman, Farmington Hills city clerk.